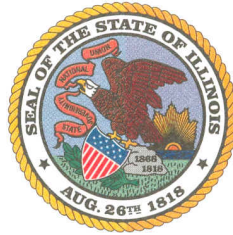


STATE OF ILLINOIS
CIRCUIT COURT
SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

JOHN S. LOWRY
Chief Judge



WINNEBAGO COUNTY COURTHOUSE
400 WEST STATE STREET, SUITE 215
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS 61101
PHONE (815) 319-4806

February 25, 2022

For Immediate Release

Contact: Thomas Jakeway
Trial Court Administrator
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PRESS RELEASE

**17th Judicial Circuit Court Amends
Mask Policy Effective Feb. 28**

ROCKFORD, IL – Based on authority granted by the Illinois Supreme Court, the 17th Judicial Circuit amended its requirements regarding masks in Boone and Winnebago Counties. Specifically, starting February 28, 2022, the wearing of a face covering or mask within any court facility is permitted, but not required. Persons choosing to wear a face covering or mask may be directed by a judge to remove their face covering or mask if deemed necessary for court purposes, such as when addressing the court or testifying. Please refer to the attached local court orders for additional details and other pandemic related information.

“This change in practice is consistent with the recent order of the Illinois Supreme Court and current community covid-19 metrics,” said John S. Lowry, Chief Judge of the 17th Circuit Court. “The court will continue to monitor its operations and further amendments could be necessary if covid-19 metrics warrant change. I note that individuals may attend court virtually unless they have been specifically directed to appear in person.”

Additional information about virtual court appearances is available on the Circuit Court’s website – <http://tinyurl.com/virtualcourt17>.

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STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
COUNTY OF BOONE
COUNTY OF WINNEBAGO

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 2022-12
TEMPORARY ORDER - COVID-19 PROCEDURE

This order supersedes Administrative Order 2021-15 entered on August 27, 2021. This order is effective February 28, 2022.

Whereas, the Supreme Court's order of June 30, 2021, in M.R. 30370, allows circuits to relax or eliminate social distancing requirements.


Whereas, the Supreme Court's order of February 22, 2022, in M.R. 30370, provides circuits may operate under specific guidance concerning building access and face coverings, stating that the wearing of masks in courthouses is permitted, but not required.

It is therefore ORDERED that, effective February 28, 2022, and subject to ongoing review and modifications, the following procedures are in effect in the 17th Judicial Circuit:

1. **Masks / Face Coverings.** The wearing of a face covering or mask within any court facility is permitted, but not required. Persons choosing to wear a face covering or mask may be directed by a judge to remove their face covering or mask if deemed necessary for court purposes, such as when addressing the court or testifying.

2. **Virtual Proceedings.** The Court will continue to operate with increased reliance on virtual proceedings and hearings pursuant to Supreme Court Rules 45 and 241. The Circuit is capable of a hybrid/blended mode of virtual and in person hearings in all courtrooms. In other words, litigants or lawyers may choose to attend court either virtually or in person. However, note that judges may specify in individual cases or settings that proceedings will be conducted only in person, or they may require a particular party or attorney to attend a proceeding in person. Further, note that virtual attendance remains strongly encouraged, especially during periods of high community COVID-19 metrics.

Those participating in a virtual hearing should plan to timely appear as scheduled and should become familiar with the evolving protocols at <https://tinyurl.com/virtualcourt17>.

ENTER: 
John S. Lowry
Chief Judge
17th Judicial Circuit Court

DATED: 2/25/22

STATE OF ILLINOIS
CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
COUNTY OF WINNEBAGO
COUNTY OF BOONE

AMENDMENT TO GENERAL ORDER 1.03

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT THE ABOVE ENTITLED GENERAL ORDER IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

1.03 Procedures for Contagious Conditions

This amended Order is effective ~~August 30, 2021~~ **February 28, 2022**. ~~For purposes of this Order, "fully vaccinated" means being two weeks past the final vaccine injection.~~ The Court enacts the following procedures with respect to minimizing the spread of contagious conditions within the Courthouse:

1. Pursuant to the Order of the Illinois Supreme Court in M.R. 30370, no individual may enter any courthouse or court facility if they:
 - a. Have new flu-like symptoms including fever, cough, or shortness of breath (excluding such symptoms caused by chronic conditions);
 - b. Currently have been directed to quarantine or isolate at home by any medical provider or public health official; or
 - c. Reside or have regular close contact with a person currently subject to a quarantine or isolation direction issued by a medical provider or public health official and are not themselves fully vaccinated.

If unable to attend a court hearing due to any of the above restrictions, individuals are strongly encouraged to call the appropriate office of the Circuit Clerk to report your situation and for instructions on how to proceed:

Winnebago County Circuit Clerk 815-319-4500

Boone County Circuit Clerk 815-544-0371

These restrictions shall not apply to any individual summoned to appear in court as a named respondent in a petition filed under Section 2 of the Department of Public Health Act, 20 ILCS 2305/2 (see procedural requirements in section ~~43~~ below).

2. **The wearing of a face covering or mask within any court facility is permitted, but not required. Persons choosing to wear a face covering or mask may be directed by a judge to remove their face covering or mask if deemed necessary for court purposes, such as when addressing the court or testifying.** ~~All court staff, attorneys and members of the public must wear a face covering or mask while within any court facility. Failure to wear a mask may lead to removal from the building. These provisions do not apply to~~

~~any individual under age 2, incapacitated, having trouble breathing, or unable to remove the mask without assistance.~~

~~Persons required to speak in the course of a court proceeding may be directed to remove a face covering or mask when speaking. Judges may choose not to wear a face covering or mask in court if they are able to maintain six-foot separation.~~

~~3. Within all court facilities, all individuals, including judges, court staff, attorneys, and jurors, should attempt to maintain at least six-foot social distancing from other individuals unless fully vaccinated.~~

3. If a petition is filed seeking a court order under Section 2 of the Department of Public Health Act, 20 ILCS 2305/2 (**petitions authorizing isolation, quarantine or closure**), the following procedures are required:

- a. Such a hearing may be held remotely, either off courthouse premises or via telephonic or video hearing pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 185.
- b. For a hearing held on courthouse premises, the respondent in such a matter may be required to wear a mask or other protective device or clothing as ordered by the court, and shall be so advised in the notice of hearing or summons issued by the attorney filing the petition.
- c. Because proceedings under 20 ILCS 2305/2 deal with sensitive matters of personal health, the Court authorizes the filing of such cases under the respondent's pseudonym (e.g., "John Doe,") rather than his or her full name.

ENTER: _____



John S. Lowry
Chief Judge
17th Judicial Circuit Court

DATED: _____

2/25/22